

- A: As the area started to increase in size, more population moved here, and more masses of people came and you can imagine there were retirees down here who didn't like their way of life disturbed. There is some feeling along that line, but it's minimal. Without doubt Disney has caused the expansion of central Florida.
- Q: Does Disney World provide much tax revenue for the state of Florida?
- A: We're taxed by the state just like any other industry, and also by the county. Our act, the Improvement District Act, did not take away the taxing authority of the county. We're taxed just like any other industry. I don't know how much we provide to the state treasury from the 4 percent sales tax, but it's a lot of money.
- Q: So, in 1973 you left Disney World and formed Fowler, Potter.
- A: Which is not a partnership. It's an association.
- Q: At that point, where was the Disney World project?
- A: Finished. The theme park opened in '71.
- Q: The development of a theme park before EPCOT and so forth, you said that was mainly Roy Disney's decision to do it that way?
- A: Well, EPCOT was going to cost a lot of money. You get money from earnings if possible, and not borrowing, so the theme park was built to provide a source of earnings for the company, and it's been highly successful in doing that.
- Q: But, there obviously are a lot of plans on the board to build a lot more in Disney World.
- A: There's a master plan for the whole piece of property. Incidentally, in the 28,000 acres that we have, there are 7,500 acres that are untouchable. They're aboriginal swamps where there are trees and flowers and all kinds of natural environment. We will never touch 'em, we protect them, there are no structures in them, the canals we excavated are not visible.

Q: What kind of consultant work do you do now?

A: Mostly business consulting, not engineering so much. I got away from being an engineer really after the war. While I headed engineering organizations, I visualized my main job as administration, which attracts me, and the operation of large organizations. The Canal Zone was such an organization. I always made sure I had top-drawer engineers in an organization. When I was in Alaska I bumped into a young lieutenant up there by the name of Duncan Brown, who impressed me no end as a top, top fellow in the Corps, and when I went to Omaha I had him transferred from wherever he was to Omaha, to the District there. And, when I went to the Canal Zone, I had him transferred as chief engineer of the Canal Zone. In that way I could put all those responsibilities, which were major, on him and know they were being done right, while I devoted my time to the diplomatic part and getting along and finding out how to get along with two kinds of employees. Dunc Brown left the Corps somewhat after I left the Canal Zone. If I'd been further along here, he'd have come here, but he joined the Tudor Organization and then became a victim of multiple sclerosis, eventually died. Brilliant, brilliant man.

Q: Have you kept up contacts with the Corps since you left the military?

A: Well, I always felt that if you tried to go back to people in the Corps for something, you were doing a very wrong thing. And then there's a conflict of interest statute and regulations that are severe. I can never sit down and negotiate a contract with anybody in the Corps for the rest of my life! Or anybody in the Army. I can't sit in on negotiations, I can't ask for consideration of a contract, so I've been very chary of having to do with officers in the Corps or organizations of the Corps except on a very social basis, where no business was involved at all. I don't believe in people throwing their weight around, and I guess, fortunately, I might say that General [Joseph K.] Bratton is the first Chief who I didn't know very well and, of course, any influence I could exert is getting less and less.

Q: I'm just wondering, though, if you have any observations about ways in which the Corps may have changed over the last oh, 50 years now, because you joined the Corps, of course, in 1928, so a lot of things have happened in the Army and within society since then. Do you have any feelings about the major ways in which the Corps has changed since you first joined?

A: Well, there's no greater admirer of the Corps than myself. I came in in the early days, as against where we are today, went through a great many of the political strifes with the Bureau of Reclamation and at times when the Hoover Commission came out with the reports, became a little bit worried that those less than thoughtful things might be implemented. But I got a lot of faith, as I said before, I was standing on a lock wall with Mr. Sherman Adams, and this subject came up, and he said, "Oh, don't worry," he says, "if they did away with the Corps, they'd have to reinvent it."

I think we are one of the important, one of the most important, organizations that exist in the U.S. government, and not only because of the civil things that we do, but I think more important because of our civilian contacts, we're able to mobilize and to do important construction jobs in case of conflict that we couldn't do if we didn't have the relationship with the construction industry that has always existed. I think all you have to do is look at something like the Manhattan project to realize that it was built because we had big-minded people in the Corps who were not fazed by size of project, and who could get civilian enterprise to enter jointly in building and making it work.

I wish the American public would know more about the capability we have. I think the Corps could do anything! Who is doing the major works in Saudi Arabia at the present time? We have a Division out there. We have a Support District in the United States. Who dredged the Suez Canal after the Egyptians decided to open it again? That's not well known, but I just have complete faith that there's no project in this world the Corps couldn't do. And a large part of that stems from our relationships with private industry, the contractors'

organizations, the trust they have in the Corps, and the trust we have in them.

Q: Time and time again throughout the last three days, I've been impressed by the fact that you seem to be a real practitioner of public relations, and in fact you've admitted, either explicitly or implicitly, that many of your jobs had a lot of public relations mixed up with them. And, so my question is, do you really like people all that much?

A: Oh, I love 'em. I think people are the greatest things in the world, and I think I've been able to do the jobs that I've done because of that love of people and the joy in being with them, to be a part of organizations, and peripherally, that sentiment I have, and that feeling I have, has been to the credit of whomever I was working for.

I wouldn't have been able to do those jobs had I not been with prestigious organizations, but I was able to help the organization because of respect for people as people, and that's all across the board, from politicians to industrialists to what have you.

Q: What, do you think, in your background gave you this ability to work with people so well? Anything in particular?

A: Oh, I think it started, really started, in the Kansas City District. Kansas City, as a city, totally respects the Corps of Engineers. They take the District Engineer into their arms, they make him a part of the civic life of the area. I was asked to join the Kansas City Club, which was the only major club in Kansas City. I got to know a great many people there. I was totally dedicated to the engineering aspects of the projects that we had under construction in the Kansas City District, and I made lots of talks about those projects. I soon discovered that you can talk to the annual meeting of the Chamber of Commerce and tell them how great it was to have 30,000 cubic feet of water go down the Missouri River every day. That didn't impress them too much. The fact that navigation could go was important. So, I gradually changed my approach in describing projects to get away from the Engineer vernacular and become understandable

to people who weren't Engineers, who happened to be lawyers or shopkeepers or whatever made up the membership of the organization before which I was speaking. And, once that came to my mind--it took a little while to do it--I became an accepted public speaker, and I guess that started it all. I don't know how many speeches I've made in my life, but when you went through my West Point files you saw there was one thick file of speeches that I've made.

Q: That's right. A person like you who has this ability to identify with people and who obviously likes to be with people often goes into politics. Have you ever thought about going into politics?

A: Ah, I've been importuned, since being in Florida, to run for higher office, but that really doesn't, interest me too much. For several reasons: number one, you've got to have a campaign, and you've got to mouth things that you may not believe in. I think one example of why it doesn't interest me is what happened to Mr. Moses, who once ran for governor of New York. And, he went around the state and said what he was going to do and what had to be done, how he was going to do it, and no matter how unacceptable it might've been, he said, this has to be done, et cetera. He did not reach the primaries.

So, I'm not saying that politicians are not forthright, but they've got to live with the practicalities, and I just never want to face up to something like that. I've accepted a great many civic appointments, for instance, the governor appointed me to the Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, which had been in serious difficulty. And, I think I was appointed to it because of, immodestly, the stature I had in the state, but also a reputation for doing things in the right way and economically. But, I'd rather do that sort of thing than be beholden to people in occupying an elected job. I'd rather be appointed to things than elected to things.

Q: General Potter, whenever anybody looks back on life, he probably looks at some things he wishes he had done a bit differently or perhaps some opportunities he wishes he had taken that he didn't take. I'm wondering, as you look back at your

life, whether there are some things you would've liked to have done differently, whether there are opportunities you didn't take, or whatever? Do you have any comments about things you would've done differently if you could do them over again?

A: That's quite a question, isn't it? As I told you over lunch the other day, I consider that I've been very, very lucky. In being lucky I've been on the go all the time. When I came from, well, even the fact I was suspended a year from the military academy has worked out better than if I'd graduated with my own class, because the timing of events that followed could not have happened if I'd graduated in 1927. I wouldn't have gone to Nicaragua because I would've been in Fort DuPont before that and would've left by then.

I wanted to go to MIT and I was assigned to MIT. There's only one school that I wanted to go to that I used to send people to, but by the time I was capable or free enough to go there, it was too late. I was going somewhere else. I wanted to go to Harvard Business School. I guess that's the only thing I ever wanted to do that I missed, but if you look down through my career you'll find that I was always going from one place to another place on call, happening to be in the right place. I was in Kansas City when the problems started in Alaska, and the Chief said, "Go to Alaska." Well, I didn't have any choice. I'd wanted to go, I'd never been there. When I was up there Pick became Chief, and he said, "Leave Alaska and come down and be Assistant Chief of Civil Works." While I was there the opportunity came to go to the War College, and then the big flood happened on the Missouri River and since I had been in the Missouri River and he knew I knew the Missouri, he said, "You go out to Omaha." And, then they had the problems in the canal and--not too serious, but--Sturgis said, "Go to the Canal Zone!" And then, the happenings there that resulted in the hassle about being Chief caused me to get the job with Mr. Moses and the end result of that was meeting Walt Disney. And, nobody could've been luckier than I in what has happened to him during his life.

Now, I would never have wanted to be in politics. What else is left? If I'd taken that job with the

World Bank, I would've ended up being an engineer-type with a little office in the World Bank reading survey reports and economic feasibility reports and all that sort of thing, which, to me, is a very distasteful life. But, I had to grab at something in those days, because I was going nowhere in the Army after I left the Canal Zone.

So, I don't know, I've never sat down and said, would I like to be this, that, or thus and so. Maybe I would have liked to have been capable of starting my own business. And, one of the main reasons when we left--Fowler and I left Disney--was we wanted to try being in our own business. That resulted in one thing I didn't get in before. I was approached to go to Iran. So I went over to Iran for 16 days to advise people over there on the construction of a major town just north of Bander Abas, where the Shah wanted to build a major oil tanker maintenance facility, the biggest in the world. And, that would require the construction of quite a town. I went over there and saw that the engineers that they had doing the job were not progressing, and I reorganized the engineering effort. The main reason I wanted to go there I'd never been to that part of the world! And, I guess the last chance I'd ever have to get in a country like Iran. Incidentally, I admired what the Shah was doing. He was really turning that country around. It was going to become important. They had lots of oil to fund themselves for several years, important iron deposits, and other minerals in the mountains. He had ambitious goals for his country, and he would've accomplished them except the religious issue got him, and when you interfere with a people's religion you're stepping on quicksand. You cannot interfere with people's religion, or their way of life, which is one of the things our country does too much. We try to change people's lives in foreign countries. The mores of people change only gradually in generations, they are not changed because somebody gave 'em a billion dollars this year for a new road. We should not try to change people to our image or way of life. Countries have their own history and way of life. Their problems are not ours and they resent our trying to move in. It distresses me.

Q: So, you are pretty satisfied with your life, I

guess. Not too many regrets or anything like that?

A: No, we have enough to live on comfortably, and unless things really go to pot we can meet emergencies. I'm lucky to have reached the age of 75 and still be in good health as per my last physical examination.

Q: You mentioned about our government trying to change people's lives in other countries. Do you think the government tries to change people's lives too much in this country, as well?

A: Well, when I was a younger man we were not a welfare state.

Q: Is that the way you would describe it today?

A: Yes, yes. We've had a lawncare fellow here, who when he became the proper age, said he wanted to go on oh, I forget, on food stamps and welfare--I don't think he had any social security, maybe he did. We've had maids we've interviewed who don't want to take the job because they can get more not working. People will work for long enough to qualify as having worked and then quit. I think the program, the idea behind the program, is excellent. The administration is awful.

Q: How would you describe yourself?

A: I think as a business executive.

Q: That's it?

A: I think so, yes. Now, and have been, since the World War. District Engineer, I was a business executive.

Q: But, does that describe a personality as well?

A: How do you describe your personality? Only somebody else can do that. Only somebody else.

Q: Do you have any concluding observations that you'd like to put on the record?

A: This, that I'm awfully glad that this program's under way because my children and grandchildren



have importuned me time after time to write a biography, and I know of other officers who have written their bios for their children, but I've never felt that the career of an Army officer and a business executive and my career would have any public interest whatsoever! I just don't feel that. I've not been that prominent. I didn't invent anything. While I was the governor of the Canal Zone I was not an elected governor of a state. That's one of the beautiful things about being governor down there, you don't have to run for office.

Q: Well, I thank you very much for your time.

A: Thank you.